

Stoltzfus wins top GOP seat

• Pledges party unity
in Maryland Senate

By AMY DOMINELLO
and KIRSTEN MARIE FRESE
Capital News Service

ANNAPOLIS — Republican state senators elected new leaders Tuesday who said they would help unify the minority party.

State Sen. Martin G. Madden, representing Howard and Prince George's counties, received unanimous support from 14 fellow Republicans for the job of Senate minority leader.

Senate Republicans then threw their support behind state Sen. J. Lowell Stoltzfus, who represents Somerset, Worcester and Wicomico counties, for the job of minority whip.

"We're going to walk back on the floor [in January] with the same number we left with," Madden said, following the general elections that maintained the status quo in the 47-member chamber. "I envision a caucus of 15 full partners."

Sen. Larry E. Haines of Carroll County said Madden has the political savvy to work with the Democratic leadership to get things accomplished.

Madden said Senate Republicans also will be working more closely with House Republicans to "push for policies that reflect our Republican principles of fiscal responsibility, including lowering taxes and less burdensome government policies."

Specifics are expected to be outlined at the caucus' next meeting in December, where each senator would have the opportunity to name priorities for the 1999 General Assembly.

Stoltzfus, who as whip will help to line up GOP votes on key issues, joined Madden in a call for unity. "Everyone agrees unity is the goal," he said.

Madden and Stoltzfus will fill positions left vacant in the September primaries, when Minority Leader F. Vernon Boozer, of Baltimore County, and Minority Whip John Derr, of Frederick and Washington counties, lost their seats. Derr and Boozer were considered moderate Republicans by members of both parties.

Republican colleagues described Madden as a moderate, and Stoltzfus as more conservative.

Stoltzfus said that with the ouster of Boozer and Derr, Senate Republicans will move more toward the right. "The caucus is much more conservative than what it was," he said.

For instance, on the issue of abortion, Boozer and Derr were supporters of abortion rights.

Stoltzfus and Madden oppose abortion and would support attempts to outlaw partial-birth, or late-term abortions, Madden and an aide for Stoltzfus said.

Stoltzfus was a member of the Maryland House of Delegates from 1991 to 1992 and has been a state senator since 1992. He serves on the Senate Economic and Environmental Affairs Committee.

A Somerset County farmer, Stoltzfus was born in Pottstown, Pa. in 1949.

He is a 1973 graduate of Salisbury State College.

STAC -
P. E. M. A. T.
11-19-98